

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Protecting Parks for Future Generations

**Testimony of
Joy M. Oakes, Regional Director
National Parks Conservation Association**

Re: "The National Parks: Will they survive for future generations?"

**before the
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources
of the House Government Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives**

March 14, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am Joy Oakes, director of the National Parks Conservation Association's mid-Atlantic region. Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. As the only national, independent membership organization dedicated to preserving the park system, NPCA protects our land and landmarks by partnering with Americans who understand that preserving our national parks also preserves our heritage as a nation.

Today, NPCA has 300,000 members across the country who care deeply about the well being of our national parks. NPCA greatly appreciates your commitment to conducting an extensive, nationwide, in-depth examination during the next two years of the funding challenges facing our National Park System. Your willingness to devote such significant personal effort to this issue, together with your recent introduction of H.R. 1124, the National Park Centennial Act, along with Representatives Baird, Platts, Cummings and such a strongly bipartisan group of legislators, are heartening at a time when the stresses faced by our beloved national parks are so significant. We hope that the attention you bring to the need to better protect our national heritage will help our national parks not merely to survive, but also to thrive.

My testimony will focus first on the purpose of our National Park System and the American legacy it preserves for future generations. I then will describe the funding challenges that are jeopardizing that heritage in the major areas for which the National Park Service receives federal



1300 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone (202) 223-NPCA (6722) • Fax (202) 659-0650



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 2

funds—operations, maintenance (transportation and non-transportation), and land acquisition—and cite specific examples in the mid-Atlantic region.

Why We Have National Parks

Our national parks include icons of democracy such as the Statue of Liberty, the home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the battlefields of Palo Alto, Fort Necessity, Little Bighorn, Gettysburg, and Valley Forge. They include inspirational places such as the cliff houses at Mesa Verde, the vast chasm of the Grand Canyon, and the hallowed ground of Antietam National Battlefield. They provide extraordinary settings for our families to enjoy campfire stories at places like Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite, marvel at the giant trees in Redwood National Park, and learn about the birth of our nation at Independence Hall.

National parks are places that inspire us as a nation, teach our children about America's history and the wonders of the natural world, and realize the dreams of our forefathers that "the parks contain the highest potentialities of national pride, national contentment, and national health." The national parks provide incredible opportunities to connect all Americans, but especially youth with our collective history and to train the next generation of scientists. Education that links classroom learning with field experiences produces better results. Visiting a park brings history to life. My fifth-grade son and I visited Eisenhower National Historic Site last winter. Standing in the sunroom where President and Mrs. Eisenhower entertained Soviet Premier Khrushchev and other Cold War leaders, gazing at the rural landscapes the President painted from that sunroom, walking into the adjacent living room to examine the ornate coffee table that Mrs. Eisenhower prohibited the president from propping his feet upon, the Eisenhowers became real to us in ways that cannot be reproduced through even the best of textbooks.

Approximately one of every five of America's 388 national parks are found in the mid-Atlantic states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Most were set aside for their rich historical and cultural values. Places like Jamestown at Colonial National Historical Park in Virginia, Independence National Historical Park in Pennsylvania, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine in Maryland, Appomattox Court House National Historical Park in Virginia, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site in Virginia, and, of course, Gettysburg, are living reminders that even America's democracy is a work in progress.

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 3

And parks like Assateague Island National Seashore in Maryland, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, New River Gorge National River in West Virginia, and Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, remind us that much of our nation's early history in the mid-Atlantic was made in landscapes of spectacular beauty, preserved today in national parks that protect fascinating ancient geological features,¹ significant biodiversity,² some of the rarest endangered species,³ and some of the most beautiful scenery in the system.

Defining the Funding Problem

NPCA recently released *Faded Glory: Top 10 Reasons to Reinvest in America's National Park Heritage* to bring attention to the multiple resource challenges that face the national parks. That report, which I would like to provide for the record, illustrates the many kinds of funding shortfalls that are tarnishing the luster of some of our nation's most special places.

Faded Glory underscores that the chronic lack of adequate funding poses very real risks for the National Park System—poaching that could eliminate 19 species from the parks; crumbling historic buildings and structures, two-thirds of which are in need of repair; unsafe roads; the theft of precious artifacts of American history; loss of critical habitat to invasive species; and many more challenges. Insufficient funding also means a lost opportunity to excite, educate and inspire the schoolchildren who could be the next Thomas Edison, Martin Luther King, Jr, or Stephen Mather.

Budget shortfalls affect the quantity and quality of public education programs and school outreach that national parks have historically been able to provide. During fiscal year 2004, Shenandoah National Park offered 800 fewer ranger-led programs than it did just two years before. The museum exhibit at Gettysburg contains a wealth of items that tell the story of the battle and offer a glimpse into the life of a Civil War soldier, but more than half of the items in the Park Service museums and archival collections have yet to be catalogued or shared with visitors. These are just two examples of how insufficient funds for the parks affects the American experience.

¹ Exposed rocks at Old Rag Mountain and Mary's Rock tunnel at Shenandoah are of ancient granitic and metamorphic-volcanic origin on the order of a billion years old.

² More than 1,300 species of vascular plants, 50 mammal species, 51 species of amphibians and reptiles, 30 fish species, and more than 200 bird species are resident or transient at Shenandoah.

³ The Shenandoah salamander is endemic to high elevation talus slopes in the central part of the park and is federally endangered.

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 4

Managing the National Park System is an enormous undertaking. The 388 units that comprise the National Park System include more than 30,000 structures and 80 million artifacts. The Park Service's portfolio includes 8,000 miles of roads, 1,500 bridges, 5,385 housing units, 1,500 water and wastewater systems, 200 radio systems, 400 dams and more than 200 solid waste operations. These are all integrated into one of the most awe-inspiring repositories of our collective American heritage.

Today, despite the strong support of the American people and increasing recognition in Congress that there is a problem in our parks, the National Park Service lacks the funds to do the job that Congress requires, visitors expect, and our national heritage demands. The parks are short more than \$600 million each year in the vital operating funds they need to serve the public and protect our national treasures. Little if any progress has been made in reducing the size of the maintenance backlog for historic structures and transportation infrastructure, with estimates continuing to range between roughly \$4 billion and \$7 billion. And funding has been drying up for the acquisition of important lands that should be part of our National Park System.

Operations Funding

An analysis of business plans completed by the National Park Service demonstrates that the annual shortfall in operational funding for the National Park System exceeds \$600 million. That shortfall has, for a variety of reasons, grown over a long span of time. In recent years, the parks have been stretched increasingly thin by unbudgeted cost-of-living increases, unreimbursed storm damage, and insufficient funding for new homeland security needs, which contribute to and compound the burden of the annual operating deficit. From fiscal year 2002 to fiscal year 2004, unfunded mandates cost the Park Service approximately \$170 million. And between fiscal years 1984 and 2002, Park Service staffing costs, which more than doubled in that timeframe, were underfunded by \$419 million.

Three major events explain the shortfall in staffing costs between fiscal years 1984 and 2002: the annually mandated cost-of-living adjustment that was instituted in 1975; the conversion of the federal benefits program for federal civilian employees in 1984; and the introduction of the ranger careers initiative in 1994 which resulted in a general increase in grade levels for Park Service rangers. Improving the professional status of these mission-driven public servants was extremely important,

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 5

but it came with unavoidable financial impacts that have had a profound effect on individual park units. On a cumulative basis, staffing costs increased \$636 million in this time frame, and the National Park Service (NPS) received only \$217 million to cover these costs, resulting in an accumulated shortfall by 2002 of \$419 million.

Last fall, after a public outcry about service cutbacks in the national parks, congressional appropriators responded with the largest-ever park-by-park increase in operations funding. However, only a small fraction of the initial 5 percent across-the-board increase for the parks has actually improved the bottom line for each park. Two across-the-board cuts reduced the increase, which was further eroded by unfunded mandatory cost of living increases and other uncontrollable costs at the park and regional levels. These costs affect every park and region differently. But the bottom line for parks like Gettysburg, for example, was still an erosion in purchasing power by roughly \$60,000 from fiscal year 2004.

As a park's purchasing power decreases, productivity and services decline. Park managers downgrade open positions, extend hours for some staff, add some tasks to other staff's workload, and determine that some tasks will simply go undone until a crisis forces the issue. At Petersburg, for example, the park is operating without an IT support person. Most of us understand the importance of dependable computer equipment. Without it, productivity plummets.

The landscape is not entirely bleak. This year, the administration budgeted for most of the expected cost of living increase for fiscal year 2006 and also budgeted for uncontrollable costs. However, of the proposed 3 percent operational increase of \$50.5 million, only \$22 million would go to the actual base operating budgets of individual parks. That amount does not come close to meeting the parks' needs for programmatic increases to pay for resource protection and visitor services. This is why NPCA recommends that Congress add \$100 million to the President's request for fiscal year 2006. Without a more meaningful increase, the parks will see little if any improvement in their ability to protect park resources, maintain park facilities, and provide visitors with the kinds of memorable experiences they expect.

Homeland Security Demands

The Park Service's operational woes are being compounded by unfunded demands related to homeland security. Examples of these costs include the protection of key assets and operational

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 6

security at icon and border parks, radio communication upgrades, and the temporary relocation of staff on detail to protect parks during elevated threat levels. Since September 11, 2001, the Park Service has spent \$26 million from its operating budget for security needs, primarily in border and icon parks. The National Park Police have spent an additional \$14 million, for a total expenditure of \$40 million. The Park Service now estimates it spends an extra \$63,000 every day the nation is at code orange alert. In 2003 alone, the Park Service was forced to use nearly \$8 million in fee receipts for increased security demanded by three code orange periods, but this amount barely scratches the surface when it comes to genuine fiscal impacts of unfunded homeland security demands on the parks. For example, construction costs associated with increased security needs at five locations—Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, and Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St Louis, and Organ Pipe National Monument in Arizona—have totaled \$48 million since September 11, 2001. The Park Service does not receive any compensation from the Department of Homeland Security for the costs it incurs and is forced to pay the bills by reducing resources devoted to core operational needs like resource protection and visitor services.

Maintenance Backlog

The maintenance backlog continues to be an intractable problem. According to the National Park Service's recent report, *Partnering & Managing for Excellence*: "This backlog has had a profound effect on the visitor experience, and the public's ability to appreciate and enjoy our national parks' natural, historic, and cultural wonders."

As you know, in 1998 the General Accounting Office estimated the maintenance backlog to be approximately \$6.1 billion based on Park Service data from 1993. However, \$1.2 billion of this estimate was for the construction of new facilities, leaving approximately \$4.9 billion for existing facility maintenance and construction. GAO's most recent estimate of the backlog continues to cite a range between \$4.1 and \$6.8 billion. As a consequence, historic structures continue to decay, and many park roads deteriorate to the point where they are unsafe.

Transportation Infrastructure

Visitor enjoyment of parks depends upon safe and enjoyable access. Two-thirds of park roads, however, are in either poor or fair condition and 56 bridges are deficient. The Park Roads

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 7

and Parkways program provides the majority of the funds for road renovation and maintenance in parks. Currently funded at \$165 million per year, the program provides only one-third of the estimated \$450 million that would be needed to bring 75 percent of park roads and bridges up to “good” condition. Unfortunately, the transportation reauthorization bill that just passed the House provides only an average of a 25 percent increase in annual Park Roads and Parkway funding through the six years of the bill. At that level, the maintenance backlog as well as risks to visitor safety and enjoyment will continue to grow.

Roads and bridges are not the only components of park transportation systems that are suffering. Alternative transportation systems such as shuttle buses, trolleys, trams, ferries, and bike and pedestrian pathways are struggling to find the maintenance and operation dollars to keep them up and running. No one disputes the fact that these systems, now in place at more than 100 parks, have had a profoundly positive effect on the visitor experience. At Acadia National Park alone, shuttle buses have removed more than 88,000 cars from the roadways. Yet, these systems do not receive the funds they need. A recent congressionally authorized study by the Department of Transportation of the public transit needs on public lands revealed that the National Park System alone will need \$1.6 *billion* over the next 20 years to provide the alternative transportation systems necessary to accommodate increasing numbers of visitor.

The NPS Alternative Transportation Program has received on average over the past six years \$11 million annually, however, this year it will receive only \$6 million from the Park Roads and Parkways account. And none of that is available to assist parks with operations and maintenance of the systems. Although the House transportation bill creates a Transit in the Parks pilot program, it provides only a total of \$80 million for six years—far short of the estimated \$360 *million* that will be needed over the six years to plan, develop, operate, and maintain these vital visitor transportation systems. These systems are not merely visitor conveniences; they can be vital to the protection of park resources and visitor enjoyment. Two-thirds of the National Park System units in Pennsylvania either already have some form of alternative transportation or are planning to institute one. The success of the new management plan for Gettysburg, for example, will depend on the expansion of the existing shuttle bus system at an estimated cost of more than \$1.4 million—or more than one-quarter of the fiscal year 2006 budget for the entire alternative transportation program for the entire

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 8

park system. Similarly, Eisenhower National Historic Site needs nearly \$1 million for its shuttle system.

Gettysburg National Military Park & Eisenhower National Historic Site, Pennsylvania

Established in 1895, Gettysburg National Military Park, the world's classroom on the American Civil War, preserves and protects resources related to the July 1863 battle during which Union forces repulsed the second Confederate invasion of the North, and where President Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous address in November 1863 to dedicate the Soldiers National Cemetery. Established in 1969, Eisenhower National Historic Site protects and interprets the only home owned by President and Mrs. Eisenhower. The Gettysburg superintendent also manages the Eisenhower site, and the parks share resources including staff.

With more than 2 million visitors each year, Gettysburg is the most visited Civil War site in the park system. With limited funds, the park holds a lottery each fall to determine which requests for ranger-led tours by school groups it will honor. In fiscal year 2004, the park offered 240 such programs, denying one of four requests.

A business plan analysis of the parks' fiscal year 2001 budget, completed in 2002 in partnership with NPCA, showed an operations and routine maintenance annual shortfall of nearly \$3.6 million, compared to an actual budget of just over \$6.1 million in fiscal year 2001--a 37 percent shortfall. Strategies identified in the plan for reducing costs included combining some administrative positions for Gettysburg and Eisenhower, consolidating offices from nine buildings throughout the park to common office space, and funding battlefield rehabilitation through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Strategies for increasing non-appropriated revenues included expanding the park's partnership with the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, increasing Licensed Battlefield Guide annual fees, increasing interpretive fees for the Electric Map and Cyclorama programs, and recovering costs for providing human resources services to area parks.

Since the fiscal year 2001 business plan, the parks' financial situation has not improved. The parks saw an overall increase in operations funding from \$6.16 million in fiscal year 2002 to \$6.45 million in fiscal year 2005, yet experienced a decline in their purchasing power of \$734,900 during

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 9

that period. To meet the budget, park managers have reduced staff from 141 permanent and seasonal full time equivalent (FTE) positions in fiscal year 2002, to 122 in fiscal year 2005.

More than \$22 million has been appropriated in project funding in fiscal years 2002-2005 through line-item construction, repair/rehabilitation funds, and other projects to address infrastructure needs, yet the maintenance backlog at the park has grown from \$37.8 million in fiscal year 2002 to \$49.7 million in fiscal year 2005. One small example of how this shortfall manifests itself at the park is that Gettysburg has been unable to repair and restore the historic iron fence around the cemetery, a line-item request since fiscal year 1998.

Two major park partners help the park meet both operational and maintenance needs. The first is *The Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg*, which has provided more than \$6 million since the organization's founding in 1989. The Friends have acquired historically significant battlefield land and conservation easements, and have assisted in battlefield restoration. Volunteers managed by the Friends and by the park provide approximately 20 percent of the labor at the park, on average 27.3 FTE per year in fiscal years 2002-2004.

The park's other partner is the *Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation*, which has raised more than \$65.4 million towards a \$95 million goal to build and operate a new Museum/Visitor Center that also will serve as a multi-modal transportation hub. Groundbreaking is scheduled for June 2005, with an opening date in late 2007 or early 2008. This effort will solve long-term park problems by preserving the park's historic collections, protecting and restoring the Cyclorama painting, managing traffic on high-visitation days, and restoring historic battlefield landscapes.

Shenandoah National Park, Virginia

Established in 1935, Shenandoah is world-renowned for its majestic waterfalls, more than 500 miles of trails including the Appalachian Trail, and the Skyline Drive's scenic vistas of the northern Blue Ridge Mountains, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. It is globally outstanding for its biological complexity and is one of the world's richest broadleaf temperate forests. Its nearly 200,000 acres are more biologically diverse than all of Europe, providing a home to more than 2,000 native species, including black bear and bobcat. The park has since 1984

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 10

attracted an average of 1.6 million visitors each year and includes 363 historic buildings and structures, such as President Hoover's summer retreat.

In fiscal year 2003, Shenandoah needed \$19.6 million to fund operations, but received only \$12.8 million from all funding sources, an operating shortfall of \$6.8 million. Years of tight budgets have forced the park to reduce mission critical operations, including air pollution monitoring, visitor safety services, and wastewater treatment systems maintenance. Based on the Budget Cost Projection module recently adopted by the National Park Service, and using Shenandoah's fiscal year 2004 appropriated budget of \$10.1 million as the base, the park anticipates its base appropriations will grow to \$10.4 million in fiscal year 2009, while delivering the same menu of services will actually cost \$13.1. The operations shortfall will continue to grow by \$2.6 million, leading to even more dramatic cuts in visitor services and resource protection.

The park's inflation-adjusted base budget has increased 14 percent since 1992. However, during that same time personnel costs increased 21.3 percent, despite a reduction in staff time of more than 15 percent. In fiscal year 2003, 81 percent of the park's operations funding came from base funding sources. The park's dependency on non-base funds poses a threat to the park's future, because non-base funding can fluctuate dramatically and should not be used for fixed costs such as permanent personnel and utilities.

Both air pollution and invasive species make Shenandoah one of the system's most threatened ecosystems. An analysis of National Park Service data for ground-level ozone, haze, and acid rain for 1999-2003 by NPCA and two partners found Shenandoah to be the third most air-polluted park in the country.⁴ Yet, the Air Resources Specialist position has been vacant for nearly two years because of funding shortfalls, and there is no sign that the air pollution that plagues the park will abate anytime soon. From 1987 through 2000, Shenandoah staff reviewed nearly 80 air pollution permit applications for new or expanded industries, including power plants, more than twice the workload of any other national park. Since 2001, the park has reviewed at least 15 more applications.

In addition, the park expends many of its resources combating aggressive, non-native plant species. This silent green invasion in Shenandoah and other national parks crowds out and even kills

⁴ *Code Red: America's Five Most Polluted National Parks*, June 2004. <http://www.npca.org/codered>

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 11

native species. A new non-native plant management team based in Shenandoah was created in fiscal year 2003 to serve Shenandoah and ten other parks in the NPS Northeast Region. Although Shenandoah benefits from this team, unfortunately, staffing it came at the expense of another vital position that remains unfilled today because of a lack of funds. The new supervisor for the SWAT team had been employed at Shenandoah in insect pest management control and environmental assessment and compliance.

Budget constraints also reduce visitor services at the park. Ranger-led walks and talks – in my experience among the most memorable highlights of a national park visit -- have been drastically reduced because of budget shortfalls. None was offered in the spring of 2003, and summer offerings were down to 27 per weekend in 2003, from 38 per weekend in 2000. Shenandoah offered nearly 800 fewer interpretive programs in fiscal year 2004 (1,032) than it did in fiscal year 2002 (1,824).

Finally, Rapidan Camp, formerly known as Camp Hoover, is a National Historic Landmark.. Located at the headwaters of the Rapidan River, Rapidan Camp was President Herbert Hoover's summer retreat from 1929-1933. Time and neglect led to the loss of several of the buildings at the camp. Using fee demonstration money, the Park Service has invested more than \$300,000 to restore the remaining camp structures to their 1931 appearance. The park provided ten staffed van tours to the camp per week in the summer of 2004, but does not expect to maintain that level of service this summer. Volunteers who live in one of the cabins unlock the buildings for visitors who are not on the van tours, but do not provide the interpretive stories that make the camp come alive.

Shenandoah's business plan identifies a number of strategies to reduce costs. For example, the park may assign certain tasks currently performed by the park to a concessionaire. In addition, the park anticipates saving up to \$30,000 by replacing trash cans along Skyline Drive overlooks with bear proof dumpster and recycling container clusters. Strategies to generate non-appropriated revenues include establishing a Shenandoah National Park Trust to raise private funds for high priority investment projects and critical operational shortfalls, and to launch a specialty license plant program.

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 12

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, New Jersey/Pennsylvania

Established in 1965, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area preserves relatively unspoiled scenic and historic lands along both the New Jersey and Pennsylvania sides of the Middle Delaware River at a famous gap in the Appalachian Mountains. It is a popular four-season recreation area, with activities ranging from hunting to horseback riding to canoeing. It is one of the ten most visited parks in the system, with more than 5 million visitors each year.

But this four-season park has a two-season budget. The park's business plan analysis based on fiscal year 2002 identified \$15.9 million in needed annual operations funding, requiring 238.4 FTE. But the park had an \$8.9 million total budget, and 134.6 FTE, leaving a funding and staffing shortfall of \$7 million, and 103.8 FTEs. Most of the funding covered personnel costs, leaving approximately half a million dollars for all other needs, including utilities, supplies, vehicle costs, and materials. The fiscal year 2005 budget increased approximately \$325,000, with \$250,000 covering personnel costs.

The park's fleet drives more than 800,000 miles per year to accomplish mission-critical tasks such as maintenance, law enforcement, resource management, and interpretation. Its approximately 90-unit fleet (owned by the Department of the Interior) in fiscal year 2005 had an average age of 13.9 years. The park would like to switch to GSA vehicles, in order to achieve a more reliable and flexible fleet and a more professional image. However, a switchover would add annual costs of \$430,000 and consume the park's entire annual allocation of discretionary funds.

Delaware Water Gap's business plan analysis showed a fiscal year 2002 shortfall of \$2.1 million and 27 FTE just for routine maintenance programs. At that time, the deferred maintenance backlog for the park was estimated at \$39 million, a large portion of which involved roads.

A report issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) in 1998 stated that Delaware Water Gap had the worst roads in the Northeast NPS region. According to recent studies by the FHA, the park's roadways are in fair to poor condition. Several roadways are experiencing sharp increases in traffic volume due to rapid development in the region. The park has successfully fended off "demolition by neglect" of many structures, but has not been able to move beyond stabilization.

The park's 1999 Trails Plan to develop an integrated system of trails with visitor support facilities, signage, and interpretation has not been implemented because of the lack of resources.

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 13

Most of the maintenance of backcountry trails that is accomplished is achieved via agreements with nonprofit groups, but many trails are in poor shape and are not interconnected.

Since 2003 Delaware Water Gap has implemented policies to increase fee collection from concessionaires and tractor-trailer traffic through the park. Annual income from canoe liveries increased from \$1,800 to \$18,000, and the park increased fees on each truck traveling Highway 209 from \$7 to \$18.

Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Pennsylvania

Established in 1931, Fort Necessity in southwestern Pennsylvania is the only park system site specifically dedicated to commemorating the French and Indian War, which set America on the path to independence from Great Britain. Here a 22-year-old George Washington led his troops against the French and their Indian allies in the first battles of the French and Indian War. Washington was forced to surrender, the only such time in his military career. The park commemorates the battle and educates visitors about the war's critical significance to the nation's heritage.

The park's fiscal year 2004 operating budget of \$1.22 million was the same as the park received ten years earlier in fiscal year 1994. According to the Consumer Price Index, a 1994 dollar was worth 79 cents in 2004, so the actual purchasing power of the park's budget eroded by \$221,000 over that decade.

A noteworthy public-private partnership begun in 1994 and led by the National Park Service and the Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks Program has raised nearly \$11.5 million⁵ to build a new Visitor and Interpretive Center for Fort Necessity and the National Road. This facility is expected to open in June or July of 2005. However, the \$495,000 needed to operate this state-of-the-art center and to offer educational programs was not allocated for fiscal year 2005 and is not expected in fiscal year 2006, requiring the park to stretch resources even more thinly.

Project funding has allowed the park to deal with the invasive honeysuckle that was taking over the historic landscape at the Great Meadow. However, that work will be in vain without the money to replant the forest line and to continue to monitor this aggressive plant.

⁵ \$3 million in private funds, \$4.5 million in state funds, and \$4 million in federal funds

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 14

As reported in an NPCA State of the Parks report on the park released in June 2004, Fort Necessity staff manages 30 historic structures listed on the Park Service official List of Classified Structures, with 57 percent in good condition, 33 percent in fair condition, and 10 percent in poor condition. But its deferred maintenance backlog was estimated in 2004 at \$3.2 million and climbing, which bodes ill for the future condition of those historic structures.

Despite the funding challenges faced by the park, Fort Necessity's full-time curator has catalogued all of the park's 3,600 archival and museum objects. This is the only park assessed by NPCA's State of the Parks program that possesses fully catalogued collections, which allows staff to more easily monitor the condition of its collection and safely make it available to researchers.

Petersburg National Battlefield, Virginia

Petersburg National Battlefield in southeastern Virginia protects lands associated with General U.S. Grant's 9.5-month siege and the Confederate defense of Petersburg from 1864-65, the eventual Confederate collapse, and the final events leading up to the end of the American Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln spent two of the last three weeks of his life here, discussing potential terms of surrender with Grant.

In fiscal year 2001, 87.1 percent of Petersburg's operations budget of \$2.38 million supported nearly 40 FTE. In fiscal year 2004, 92.1 percent of its operations budget of \$2.4 million supported 35 FTEs. Since January 2001, the park actually has lost an interpretive ranger, an historian, an auto mechanic, a GIS specialist, and an information technology specialist shared with Richmond National Battlefield Park. From fiscal year 2001-2004, Petersburg lost \$265,775 in its purchasing power.

In fiscal year 2005, the park received line-item funding to upgrade its existing maintenance facility. However, the park's auto mechanic position is open, and the park lacks the funding to fill it. Until the park can hire a mechanic, that function will remain unstaffed, with the park attempting to meet those needs via collateral duty assignments.

Dedicated park managers across the region engage creative strategies to leverage their limited dollars to get the job done, with remarkable results. For example, Petersburg National Battlefield pulled together a variety of partners to restore and then re-set one of its most dramatic assets: the "Dictator," a 13-inch seacoast mortar and the most powerful weapon used during the

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 15

siege and defense of Petersburg. The park hired experts at the Mariner's Museum in Newport News, Virginia, to restore and preserve this mortar., supplementing their work with that of volunteers. Despite wartime demands, the U.S. Army base at Fort Lee provided soldiers and special equipment to hoist the 17,000-pound gun tube from its old carriage and to re-set it. This partnership leveraged \$8,000 in the park's Fee Demo funds to complete a project in fiscal year 2004 that was valued at more than \$30,000.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

For land acquisition, the National Park Service relies on funds provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Several parks in this region have been authorized to buy lands critical to their protection but received insufficient funds for it. Others have an opportunity to buy critical lands that could mean the difference between preserving the park as it was intended or losing these valuable lands forever.

Unfortunately, the funding the federal government provides to acquire new parkland has been under steady attack in recent years. While the federal side of LWCF, which funds national park acquisitions, achieved a high watermark of \$130 million in fiscal year 2002, Congress appropriated only \$55 million for the program last year, and the administration's request for this year is \$53 million.

Gettysburg National Military Park, Pennsylvania

Of the 5,989 acres inside Gettysburg's congressionally-designated boundary, nearly 20 percent -- 1,154 acres -- remains privately owned. In fiscal year 2005, the park already has been approached by two in-holders interested in selling to the park, but with no funding in hand, the park service has not pursued even relatively small, low-cost but high-return opportunities. Gettysburg last received LWCF funding in fiscal year 2001 for acquisition of the infamous viewing tower.

Valley Forge National Historical Park, Pennsylvania

Without the \$7.5 million Senator Specter was able to obtain in fiscal years 2003 and 2004 , the Park Service would have been unable to buy the historic Waggon seller farm. Instead, that area of Valley Forge, where local farmers sold goods and services to General George Washington's

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 16

troops, now would be a 62-acre luxury subdivision. Instead, future generations will see that historic ground much as General Washington and his troops did during the bitter winter of 1777-1778.

Senator Specter also secured a \$1.5 million appropriation in fiscal year 2005 towards future acquisitions that Congress has already authorized at Valley Forge, but with more than 10 percent of the land inside the park boundary today owned by others, much more will be needed before we can complete this national shrine.

Petersburg National Battlefield, Virginia

Today one of the most exciting opportunities for protection of our Civil War history is at Petersburg. NPCA is extremely pleased that the Park Service's new General Management Plan for Petersburg supports the goal of expanding the park's boundary by 7,238 acres, and expanding its interpretive themes, especially the proposed inclusion of more information about the roles of African Americans and of women in the Petersburg Campaign, and in the siege and defense of Petersburg.

This boundary expansion is of fundamental and urgent importance to the park's future. In 1993, at the request of Congress, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission reported that 23,000 of the more than 100,000 acres of lands associated with the Petersburg campaign retained their integrity. In the decade since, some of these lands have been lost to suburban, commercial, and industrial development. And development pressures in southeastern Virginia continue to escalate. In only a few years, pressures at Petersburg likely will be comparable to those now faced by Valley Forge, Fredericksburg, and Harpers Ferry, each of which has faced high-profile, high-stakes, expensive battles against proposed development on sacred ground in the recent past. LWCF funding will be essential to protect as much of this historic landscape as possible for the benefit of future generations.

George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Virginia

Established in 1932 to preserve the history and legacy of George Washington, one of America's greatest icons, the monument recreates an excellent example of an 18th century plantation. Rich in plant and animal life, the majority of the monument is woodlands, open fields,

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 17

and beach. On a brief visit there in 2001, I saw a bald eagle flying above Pope's Creek's confluence with the Potomac River and a flock of turkey foraging at the edge of the woods.

Legislation sponsored by Senator John Warner and Representative Jo Ann Davis in the 107th Congress expanded the park's boundary by 112 acres to include two privately held tracts that have been described as the "hole in the doughnut." This is farmland surrounded by parkland, with frontage on both Pope's Creek and the Potomac River. But the opportunity to complete the park and acquire this land from willing sellers is at risk, with both tracts now listed for sale by a commercial broker. When the expansion was approved in 2002, the Congressional Budget Office estimated the costs of acquisition at between \$1 million and \$2 million—a small price to pay to protect the birthplace of the father of our country.

New River Gorge National River, West Virginia

Established in 1978, New River Gorge protects 53 free-flowing miles one of North America's oldest rivers. More than 1 million visitors travel here each year to enjoy this world-class climbing and whitewater boating destination, camp, hike the wooded trails, and enjoy wildlife and scenic beauty.

Congress expanded the park in 2002 to 72,189 acres to include approximately 1,260 acres across the river from Diamond Point, a popular scenic viewpoint. The lands in the expanded boundary now are threatened by a 2,200-unit housing development proposed inside and alongside the park boundary. Congress allocated \$2 million in fiscal year 2005 for land acquisition at the park, but this may not be sufficient to acquire the lands that are at risk.

Conclusion

The fiscal shortfalls our national parks are experiencing are not sustainable if we wish to protect our national legacy for future generations. Half-measures will no longer do. As Shenandoah superintendent Douglas Morris said in 2003, "I try to spread the pain [of budget cuts] so that no one service disappears entirely. So restrooms are cleaned fewer times per day or week. There are fewer talks per week. There are fewer ranger patrols. All of this is diminishing the experience." But this statement speaks only to a few of the visitor services responsibilities of park staff, and not to the long-term consequences of funding shortfalls on natural and cultural resource protection. When 15

National Parks Conservation Association

Joy M. Oakes

March 14, 2005

Page 18

leaky roofs need repairing, the 5 that don't get patched will just keep on leaking until the roof caves in and the house falls down.

The stakes of the funding debate for our national heritage are enormous. As some have observed, if the Smithsonian Institution is the nation's attic, the national parks are the rest of the house. We are grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, for helping us ensure that this great house of ours remains standing for generations to come.